

## What Does It Mean to Be a Baptist?

### OVERVIEW

<b>B</b> – <b>Biblical Authority</b>	– <i>Built from the Bible</i>
<b>A</b> – <b>Autonomy of the Local Church</b>	– <i>Church Governed by God</i>
<b>P</b> – <b>Priesthood of the Believer</b>	– <i>Direct Access to God</i>
<b>T</b> – <b>Two Positions (“Offices”)</b>	– <i>Shepherds &amp; Servants</i>
<b>I</b> – <b>Individual Soul Liberty</b>	– <i>Free to Obey &amp; Build Up</i>
<b>S</b> – <b>Saved, Baptized Church Membership</b>	– <i>Believers Are the Church</i>
<b>T</b> – <b>Two Pictures (“Ordinances”)</b>	– <i>Baptism &amp; Communion</i>
<b>S</b> – <b>Separation of Church and State</b>	– <i>Two Entities &amp; Purposes</i>

### INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY SUMMARY

*We hold that one should be free to believe the Word of God and act upon that belief as they have been persuaded regarding its meaning.*

#### What It Means:

1. We are free to bring glory to God as we have been created to do.
2. We are free from keeping the law for salvation or sanctification.
3. We are free to obey God apart from the bonds of sin.
4. We are free to restrict ourselves to build up others.
5. We are free to restrict ourselves to further the Gospel.

#### What It Does NOT Mean:

1. Disobeying Biblical commands & principles
2. Rejecting Biblical submission to God’s leaders
3. Ignoring Biblical morality
4. Rejecting Biblical evangelism
5. Injuring the spiritual walk of others

#### Key Questions:

- *Is this obeying the commands or principles or character of God?*
- *Will this bring good attention (glory) to God?*
- *Will this help me in my walk with God?*
- *Will this help others in their walk with God?*
- *Will this promote the work of God to the world?*
- *Am I free in my conscience to do this before God?*

## SAVED, BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### 1. Those That Are Saved (and Only the Saved) ARE Part of the Church

**1 Cor 12:13** *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

### 2. Big Church, Little Church (Universal Church, Local Church)

**THE Church:** The one (universal) church that is composed of all believers of the church age. THE church is the body of Christ, and is sometimes referred to as the bride of Christ. (Matt 16:13-20)

**A LOCAL Church:** Any group of believers gathering together in a specific, geographical area, and functioning as a Bible-defined local church. It is possible for a local church to have unbelievers as members, and/or for that local church to be doing much wrong. (Matt 18:15-17; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Thes 1:1; Rev 2-3)

### 3. Salvation Comes First, Then Baptism to Identify with a Local Church

**Acts 2:41, 47** *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added [to them].<sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

**Act 8:12** *But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 18:8; 16:31-34)*

### 4. A Different Take on Church Membership

**Traditional View:** You join a church to **become** a member of that church (emphasis on one’s choice). “I’m not committed until I join.” Then my name is on the church membership list, so I have privileges whether I attend or not. I am here to receive benefits for me and my family – I choose a church (like a consumer). When I find a better church, I’ll go there. When there are problems, I leave and go to another church. I attend when it works into my schedule, and serve when it is convenient for me.

**Biblical View:** You join a church because you are **already** a member of the Church (emphasis on obligation). I am already obligated to **the** church, so I join with and serve in a **local** church. I am here to serve others, as well as receive service from others. I am here to minister in good and bad times. I am committed to attending because of the spiritual need in my life and in the life of others which only the church can fill (Eph 4:11-16; Rom 12:3-6; Heb 3:12-13; Heb 10:24-25). Therefore, church attendance and involvement is non-negotiable for me. I work my other priorities around the church.

### 5. Local Church Membership in the Bible (fuzzy... Acts 2:41,47)